

India

**Adolescent
SRH**

Promoting Role Model of ‘Responsible Man’: Gatekeepers’ View of Addressing Young Men’s Sexual and Reproductive Health Needs in Uttaranchal, India

OR Summary 6

A formative research conducted by the FRONTIERS Program of Population Council revealed that parents and other gatekeepers were concerned about increasing sexual experimentations, drinking habits and violence among youth. All gatekeepers supported the idea of introducing SRH education and some community level intervention to address these issues of young men, particularly risk behavior related with sex and violence.

Background

Studies reveal that increasing number of boys are becoming sexually active at a very young age and indulging in various risk behaviors. In most of the cases they do not use any contraceptive method. Available evidences also show that reproductive health programs may not yield the desired results without involving men into the initiatives. In such a scenario, the gatekeepers play a critical role in facilitating/hindering access to appropriate and correct information about family planning and sexual and reproductive health, particularly to young people including newly married couples.

Objective

The broad objective of the study was to assess the attitude of parents and other gatekeepers on introduction of sexual and reproductive health education (SRH) for young people in their community and to seek their suggestions on how it could be operationalised.

Data Collection

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to collect relevant information. Thirty-four gatekeepers, including parents, teachers, Panchayat members, officials of Block Development Office and religious leaders were interviewed in-depth. Four FGDs of parents and community leaders were also organized. Information from 234 young boys and 189 girls

were collected from students of 11th and 12th grade from four intermediate colleges using self-administered structured questionnaires in a classroom setting. Besides this, two FGDs and eight in-depth interviews of young men were also conducted to complement the survey data. Attempt was also made to understand the administrative structure of official development agencies and local self governance, their functioning at the district, block and village levels and the role these institutions could play in introducing SRH education and to promote the role model of a ‘Responsible Man’ among young men.

Findings

◆ Gatekeepers felt that the advent of modern technology and explosion of electronic media, a new youth culture is emerging. They characterized today’s young men as active, smarter and aggressive in pursuing their goals. They now strive for higher education and aspire for high paid jobs. They are now more concerned for their health and are consumer driven.

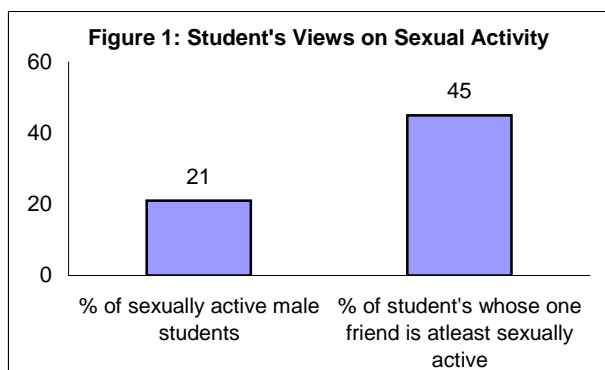
◆ Most of them felt that today’s young men do not give due respect to elders in family and in the community at large. Parents are no longer effective role models for their children. Instead peer group and media have emerged as the prime sources of information and influence for young people.

- ◆ Gatekeepers were of the view that young men identify smoking, drinking, violence and sex as part of current political and affluent culture and majority of the youth aspire to be part of it.

- ◆ Gatekeepers expressed concern on the increase in sexual and gender-based violence (GBV). The reasons for increase in GBV as identified by them include: suspicion on woman's character (n=27), disobeying (n=21) and arguing with husbands (n=14), increase in drinking habits among young men and increased demand of dowry.

- ◆ Majority of gatekeepers (22 out of 28) believed that many more boys as well as girls are becoming sexually active before marriage in their village than before. Vulgarity shown in TV programs and movies, lack of parental guidance and absence of SRH education were cited as reasons for increasing sexual risk behavior among youth.

- ◆ The students confirmed gatekeepers' views. Twenty one percent of them were sexually active and 45 percent out of them had atleast one friend who



had their first sexual experience at age 15 or below.

- ◆ All supported the need of providing SRH education to young people. They felt that the young men generally discuss SRH concerns primarily with their friends. Young men seek SRH information on variety of issues like masturbation and semen loss, how to satisfy sexual partner, reproductive

physiology including sexual organs and a host of issues around sexual worries.

- ◆ Most (23 out of 28) of gatekeepers felt that boys need to know about their body, sex and reproduction and about sexually transmitted diseases and their preventions.

- ◆ Parents were supportive of SRH education to young men. However, there was consensus that schools, health department and developmental agencies are in better position to take the lead in this initiative. The community leaders and government officials expressed their willingness to organize and supervise village level SRH interventions.

Utilization

Based on these findings the FRONTIERS Program is developing a community-based intervention to address SRH needs of young men. The OR study will promote role model of a 'Responsible Man' who is caring, knowledgeable, gender sensitive, and against domestic violence and risk behaviour. The study will be conducted in collaboration with Panchayat and state developmental agencies in Udham Singh Nagar covering two blocks.

Policy Implications

The study clearly indicates that the parents and other gatekeepers are very concerned about the effect of rapid societal changes in the community and their effect on young people's sexual and reproductive life. Rapid increase in sexual experimentations, drinking habits and violence are some of their key concerns. All gatekeepers, not only support the idea of introducing some community level intervention to address these issues, but are also willing to participate in it. This is an encouraging sign and district and block level administration could take advantage of this supportive environment to introduce community-based SRH education for young people, particularly young men.

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